

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as shown below. The claims, as pending in the subject application, read as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A system for facilitating access to descriptions of multimedia items from a plurality of content providers of said items, wherein information required by said descriptions is stored in corresponding metadata collections associated with said multimedia items, said system comprising:

(a) a metadata server associated with each said content provider and operable as a description-generating process for communicating with one or more description-receiving processes, each said metadata server being configured, for each said content provider, to perform the steps of:

(i) receiving a search request for said descriptions from one of said description-receiving processes in a predetermined search request format;

(ii) interpreting said received search request according to said predetermined search request format;

(iii) accessing said information about said multimedia items in said metadata collection of said content provider in response to said interpreted search request;

(iv) formulating from said information at least one return search request to said metadata server for further descriptions, each return search request being in said predetermined search request format;

(v) formatting said accessed information including links representing said at least one return search request as a description according to a predetermined scheme; and

(vi) sending said formatted description to the said description-receiving process; and

(b) at least one said description-receiving process accessible to and operable by potential customers of said content providers and providing said potential customers with a single user interface to access descriptions of multimedia items generated from said multiple metadata servers.

2. (Original) A system according to claim 1 wherein each said metadata collection is stored in a corresponding database.

3. (Original) A system according to claim 1 wherein each said metadata collection is stored in structured or semi-structured files.

4. (Original) A system according to claim 1 wherein said metadata server is identified by a uniform resource identifier.

5. (Currently Amended) A system according to claim 4 wherein said search request to said metadata server for the descriptions is included in said uniform resource identifier identifying said metadata server.

6. (Original) A system according to claim 1 wherein said descriptions are in XML.

7. (Original) A system according to claim 1 wherein said predetermined scheme specifies the structure and syntax of said description.

8. (Original) A system according to claim 1 wherein said predetermined scheme is represented using the XML Schema language.

9. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 1 wherein said links have a defined source and target.

10. (Original) A system according to claim 9 wherein said link source is an element containing the identity of said link target.

11. (Original) A system according to claim 10 wherein said link target is represented using a uniform resource locator.

12. (Original) A system according to claim 11 wherein said link target identifies the same metadata server that generated said link.

13. (Currently Amended) A system according to claim 1 further comprising a transaction module associated with an administrator of a corresponding

description- receiving process, said transaction module being configured to monitor a number of said search requests made to any one said metadata server and to invoice the corresponding content provider on behalf of said administrator for said number of search requests.

14. (Original) A system according to claim 13 wherein said transaction module forms part of said one metadata server and said invoicing is automatically performed by the said metadata server.

15. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 14 wherein the automatic invoicing is enabled by storing a charge identification code for said corresponding content provider in said corresponding metadata server.

16. (Original) A system according to claim 15 wherein the charge identification code for said corresponding content provider is automatically accessible by said corresponding metadata server.

17. (Original) A system according to claim 1 wherein users of said description- receiving processes are presented with an option of following a provided link to a description-generating process, said provided link comprising an advertisement for said user.

18. (Currently Amended) A system according to claim 1 wherein each said metadata server is constructed from a common customizable module, each said module being customized for association with one said content provider by an interpreter arranged to translate search requests received in said predetermined search request format from any said description-receiving process into descriptions of said corresponding metadata items of said content provider and to translate said accessed information into said description-format for return to said description-receiving process.

19. (Currently Amended) A system for providing a plurality of users access to multimedia items associated with a plurality of content providers, each said content provider having a legacy database in which descriptions of corresponding multimedia items are stored, a content database in which said corresponding multimedia items are stored, and a database manager for controlling access to said descriptions and corresponding multimedia items from said respective databases, said system comprising:

a media browser application accessible to each of said users and configured to generate user search requests for descriptions of said multimedia items, said search requests being generated in a predetermined search request format; and

a metadata server application associated with each said content provider and configured to translate each said user search request received by said metadata server application from said predetermined search request format into a specific format of said database manager to thereby provide for said database manager to query said legacy database and return at least one response description to said metadata server application, said metadata server application formulating at least one return search request to said

metadata server application for further descriptions, each return search request being in said predetermined search request format, and said metadata server translating said at least one response description into a predetermined description format and returning the translated description to the requesting media browser application for presentation to said user, said translated description including at least one link representing said return search request for further descriptions to said metadata server application.

20. (Currently Amended) A system according to claim 19 further comprising a search request transaction module associated with an administrator of said media browser, said search request transaction module being configured to monitor a number of said search requests made to any one said metadata server and to invoice the corresponding content provider on behalf of said administrator for said number of search requests.

21. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 19 wherein said media browser comprises a user interface configured for presenting said translated description to said user, said system further comprising a user transaction module by which said user may access, for consideration provided to said content provider, at least one corresponding multimedia item from said presented description.

22. (Original) A system according to claim 19 wherein said descriptions are in XML.

23. (Original) A system according to claim 21 wherein said user interface comprises a multimedia user interface arranged to reproduce at least part of said multimedia item from said returned description.

24. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 23 wherein said item comprises an image and said part comprises one of a thumbnail or low-resolution representation of said image.

25. (Currently Amended) A system for facilitating access to structured information from a plurality of heterogeneous information sources, said system comprising:

(a) an information server associated with each said information source and operable as a structured information generating process for communicating with one or more structured information receiving processes, each information server being configured to perform, for an information source, the steps of:

(i) receiving a search request for descriptions of said structured information from one of said structured information receiving processes in a predetermined search request format;

(ii) interpreting said received search request according to said predetermined search request format;

(iii) accessing information in said associated information source in response to said interpreted search request;

(iv) formulating, from said accessed information, at least one return search request to said information server for further descriptions of structured information, each return search request being in said predetermined search request format;

(v) formatting said accessed information including links representing said at least one return search request as said descriptions of said structured information according to a predetermined scheme; and

(vi) sending said formatted descriptions of said structured information to said structured information receiving process; and

(b) at least one structured information receiving process accessible to and operable by potential users of said information sources with a single user interface to access and interpret said descriptions of said structured information from said multiple information servers.

26. (Original) A system according to claim 25 wherein said information source is a database.

27. (Original) A system according to claim 25 wherein said information source is a collection of structured or semi-structured information files.

28. (Original) A system according to claim 25 wherein said information server is identified by a uniform resource identifier.



29. (Currently Amended) A system according to claim 28 wherein said search request to said information server is included in the uniform resource identifier identifying the information server.

30. (Original) A system according to claim 25 wherein said structured information is in XML.

31. (Original) A system according to claim 25 wherein said predetermined scheme specifies the structure and syntax of the said structured information to be generated.

32. (Original) A system according to claim 25 wherein said predetermined scheme is represented using the XML Schema language.

33. (Original) A system according to claim 25 wherein said link has a defined source and target.

34. (Original) A system according to claim 33 wherein said link source is an element containing the identity of said link target.

35. (Original) A system according to claim 34 wherein said link target is represented using a uniform resource locator.

36. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 35 wherein said link target identifies the same information server that generated the link.

37. (Currently Amended) A metadata server operable as a description-generating process for communicating with one or more description-receiving processes, said metadata server being configured to perform the steps of:

(i) receiving a search request for descriptions of multimedia items from one of said description-receiving processes in a predetermined search request format, wherein information required by said descriptions is stored in corresponding metadata collections associated with said multimedia items;

(ii) interpreting said received search request according to said predetermined search request format;

(iii) accessing said information about said multimedia items in said metadata collection of said content provider in response to said interpreted search request;

(iv) formulating, from said information, at least one return search request to said metadata server for further descriptions, each return search request being in said predetermined search request format;

(v) formatting said accessed information including links representing said at least one return search request as a description according to a predetermined scheme; and

(vi) sending said formatted description to said description-receiving process.

38. (Original) A metadata server according to claim 37 wherein each said metadata collection is stored in a corresponding database.

39. (Original) A metadata server according to claim 37 wherein each said metadata collection is stored in structured or semi-structured files.

40. (Original) A metadata server according to claim 37 wherein said metadata server is identified by a uniform resource identifier.

41. (Currently Amended) A metadata server according to claim 40 wherein said search request to said metadata server is included in said uniform resource identifier identifying said information server.

42. (Original) A metadata server according to claim 37 wherein said descriptions are in XML.

43. (Original) A metadata server according to claim 37 wherein said predetermined scheme specifies the structure and syntax of said description.

44. (Original) A metadata server according to claim 37 wherein said predetermined scheme is represented using the XML Schema language.

45. (Original) A metadata server according to claim 37 wherein said link has a defined source and target.

46. (Original) A metadata server according to claim 45 wherein said link source is an element containing the identity of said link target.

47. (Original) A metadata server according to claim 46 wherein said link target is represented using a uniform resource locator.

48. (Previously Presented) A metadata server according to claim 47 wherein said link target identifies the same metadata server that generated the link.

49. (Currently Amended) An information server operable as a structured information generating process for communicating with one or more structured information receiving processes, said information server being configured to perform the steps of:

(i) receiving a search request for descriptions of structured information from one of said structured information receiving processes in a predetermined search request format;

(ii) interpreting said received search request according to said predetermined search request format;

(iii) accessing information in an information source in response to said interpreted search request;

(iv) formulating, from said information, at least one return search request to said information server for further descriptions of structured information, each return search request being in said predetermined search request format;

(v) formatting said accessed information including links representing said at least one return search request as said descriptions of said structured information according to a predetermined scheme; and

(vi) sending said formatted descriptions of said structured information to said structured information receiving process.

50. (Original) An information server according to claim 49 wherein said information source is a database.

51. (Original) An information server according to claim 49 wherein said information source is a collection of structured or semi-structured information files.

52. (Original) An information server according to claim 49 wherein said information server is identified by a uniform resource identifier.

53. (Currently Amended) An information server according to claim 52 wherein said search request to said information server is included in the uniform resource identifier identifying the said information server.

54. (Original) An information server according to claim 49 wherein said structured information is in XML.

55. (Original) An information server according to claim 49 wherein said predetermined scheme specifies the structure and syntax of the said structured information to be generated.

56. (Original) An information server according to claim 49 wherein said predetermined scheme is represented using the XML Schema language.

57. (Original) An information server according to claim 49 wherein said link has a defined source and target.

58. (Original) An information server according to claim 57 wherein said link source is an element containing the identity of said link target.

59. (Original) An information server according to claim 58 wherein said link target is represented using a uniform resource locator.

60. (Original) An information server according to claim 59 wherein said link target identifies the same information server that generated the said link.

61. (Currently Amended) A computer readable storage medium, having a computer-readable program recorded thereon, where the program is configured to make a metadata server operable as a description-generating process for communicating with one or more description-receiving processes, said program comprising:

code for receiving a search request for descriptions of multimedia items from one of said description-receiving processes in a predetermined search request format, wherein information required by said descriptions is stored in corresponding metadata collections associated with said multimedia items;

code for interpreting said received search request according to said predetermined search request format;

code for accessing said information about said multimedia items in said metadata collection of said content provider in response to said interpreted search request;

code for formulating, from said information, at least one return search request to said metadata server for further descriptions, each search return request being in said predetermined search request format;

code for formatting said accessed information including links representing said at least one return search request as a description according to a predetermined scheme; and

code for sending said formatted description to the said description-receiving process.

62. (Currently Amended) A computer readable storage medium, having a computer-readable program recorded thereon, where the program is configured to make an

information server operable as a structured information generating process for communicating with one or more structured information receiving processes, said program comprising:

code for receiving a search request for descriptions of structured information from one of said structured information receiving processes in a predetermined search request format;

code for interpreting said received search request according to said predetermined search request format;

code for accessing information in response to said interpreted search request;

~~copy~~ code for formulating, from said information, at least one return search request to said information server for further descriptions of structured information, each return search request being in said predetermined search request format;

code for formatting said accessed information including links representing said at least one return search request as said descriptions of said structured information according to a predetermined scheme; and

code for sending said formatted descriptions of said structured information to said structured information receiving process.